RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

26 April 2010

IND103449.E

India: Electronic passports (e-passports), including usage and availability
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Indian government has announced plans to develop electronic passports (e-passports) and to digitize the passport application process (BusinessWeek 21 Sept. 2009; The Economic Times 25 Feb. 2010). The latter project, which also aims to process passport applications more quickly, is known as the Passport Seva Project (ibid.... Thaindian News reports that the e-passports will ... International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) ... contactless chip containing personal data and bior... 08).

E passports

The e-passport project was ... onic passports were officially presented to the Pr... me Minister (Thaindian News 25 June 2008; I... t that official and diplomatic e-passports were issue... ept. 2009; Tech-On! 13 May 2009; The Times of I... a professor at the School of Management Studies at the Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate:

> E-passport services were launched in India in 2008 and e-passports were issued to the President, Vice-president, Prime Minister, diplomats and a few other high officials. As per the available information, the service will be available to other citizens in about a year's time. A few centres have been set up in several cities in India which will issue e-passports. The number of centres will be increased gradually. (10 Apr. 2010)

BusinessWeek reports that the government had planned to issue about 800,000 e-passports to Indian citizens by 2010 (21 Sept. 2009). However, an Economic Times article reported that, as of March 2010, e-passports were not yet available; the article cites the External Affairs Minister as saying electronic passports would be issued "soon" to Indian citizens (6 Mar. 2010).

Passport Seva Project

Media sources report that the government planned to start rolling out the Passport Seva Project in specific cities in June 2009, with the goal of having the

project operational across the country in 2010 (The Economic Times 25 Feb. 2010; BusinessWeek 21 Sept. 2009). However, in early 2010, media sources reported that the Passport Seva Project had missed several deadlines, because of difficulties with the requisite software (The Economic Times 25 Feb. 2010; Governance Now 25 Feb. 2010; Indian Express 1 Jan. 2010). Further information on whether or not Project Seva has been launched could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

BusinessWeek. 21 September 2009. Swati Prasad. "India Passports to Go Digital Next Year." <http://www.businessweek.com/globalbiz/content/sep2009/gb20090921_074850.htm> [Accessed 30 Mar. 2010]

The Economic Times. 6 March 2010. "India to Issue E-Passports to Citizens Soon." <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/news-by-industry/services/travel/visa-power/India-to-issue-e-passports-to-citizens-soon/articleshow/5652067.cms> [Accessed 30 Mar. 2010]

_____. 25 February 2010. "TCS' Passport Seva Project Likely to be Launched by Next Month." <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Infotech/ITeS/TCS-passport-seva -project-likely-to-be-launched-by-next-month/articleshow/5612570.cms> [Accessed 30 Mar. 2010]

Governance Now. 25 February 2010. Samir Sachdeva. "Passport Seva Project to be Launched in March." <http://www.governancenow.com/gov-next/egov/passport-seva-project-be -launched-march> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2010]

India. N.d. Press Information Bureau. "Photogallery." <http://pib.nic.in/release/press_ph4.asp?kk=6/25/2008%209:25:20%20PM> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2010]

Indian Express. 1 January 2010. Shubhajit Roy. "Passports Within 3 Days of Verification." <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/passportswithin3daysofverification/56214> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2010]

Professor, School of Management Studies, Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad, India. 10 April 2010. Correspondence.

Tech-On!. 13 May 2009. "Infineon MCUs Bring E-Passports to India." <http://techon.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/HONSHI/20090427/169445> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2010]

Thaindian News. 25 June 2008. "India Launches E-Passports, President Gets it

First." <http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/india-launches-e-passports-president-gets-it-first-lead_10064470.html> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2010]

The Times of India. 16 July 2009. Prafulla Marapakwar. "Gov't to Introduce E-Passports." <http://www1timesofindia.indiatimes.com/NEWS-India-Govt-to-introduce -e-passports/articleshow/4785585.cms> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2010]

<u>Additional Sources Consulted</u>

Oral sources: A specialist in Indian e-governance and officials from the High Commission of India in Ottawa were unable to respond to requests for information within the time constraints of this Response.

Internet sites, including: Assam Times, Government of India, The Hindu Business Line, The Kashmir Times, The Pioneer.